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SPECIAL COMMITTEE ON THE SITUATION WITH REGARD TO THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE DECLARATION ON THE GRANTING OF INDEPENDENCE TO COLONIAL COUNTRIES AND PEOPLES

VERBATIM RECORD OF THE 1425TH MEETING

Held at Headquarters, New York,
on Monday, 19 July 1993, at 10 a.m.

Chairman: Mr. LOHIA (Papua New Guinea)

- Request for hearing
- Reports of the Sub-Committee on Small Territories, Petitions, Information and Assistance
- Question of Pitcairn
- Question of St. Helena
- Questions of American Samoa, Anguilla, Bermuda, British Virgin Islands, Cayman Islands, Guam, Montserrat, Tokelau, Turks and Caicos Islands, United States Virgin Islands
- Organization of work

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The meeting was called to order at 11.05 a.m.

REQUEST FOR HEARING (aide-mémoire 17/93)

The CHAIRMAN: With respect to the question of the implementation of the Declaration by the specialized agencies, members have before them a request for hearing, circulated in aide-mémoire 17/93, from Mr. Carlyle Corbin of the Working Group of Non-Independent Caribbean Countries of the Caribbean Development and Cooperation Committee.

If there is no objection, may I take it that the Committee decides to accede to that request?

It was so decided.

REPORTS OF THE SUBCOMMITTEE ON SMALL TERRITORIES, PETITIONS, INFORMATION AND ASSISTANCE (continued)

QUESTION OF PITCAIRN (A/AC.109/L.1799)

The CHAIRMAN: As the Subcommittee approved the draft decision contained in the report without a vote, may I take it that the Committee wishes to do the same?

The Committee adopted the report and approved the draft decision contained therein. (A/AC.109/1171)

QUESTION OF ST. HELENA (A/AC.109/L.1800)

Mr. BEREZOVSKY (Russian Federation) (interpretation from Russian): The draft decision in document A/AC.109/L.1800 contains the usual references to military activities of colonial Powers in Non-Self-Governing Territories. For many years such references have automatically been made, without a call for additional information and without taking account of the changes that have taken place in the world.

In its report (A/AC.109/L.1795), submitted to the Committee in May and approved by the Committee, the open-ended Working Group said that although

(Mr. Berezovsky,
Russian Federation)

significant progress had been made with regard to the language of resolutions and decisions, there was room for improvement, and that the Special Committee might wish to review the resolutions/decisions concerned so as to make those changes which might be necessary in the texts to be submitted for the consideration of the Committee at its summer session - that is, right now.

The draft decision in document A/AC.109/L.1800 has not been the subject of such a review. We feel that we ought to make the appropriate changes because, first, the provisions of these draft decisions are reflected in the Committee's draft resolutions on military activities, resulting in some repetitions; secondly, as we understand it, no real military activities are taking place in St. Helena; and, thirdly, the document we adopted at our last session, by which we are guided in our work today, shows that decisions of this kind actually complicate cooperation between the Committee and the administering Powers.

(Mr. Berezovsky,
Russian Federation)

Cooperation between the administering Power and the Committee is important. If it receives such cooperation, the Committee can fulfil its mandate while to the greatest possible degree promoting the interests of the population of the Non-Self-Governing Territory.

For this reason, the Russian delegation feels that we might easily delete the provision in the draft decision on St. Helena regarding military activities. If the Committee considers that it is not possible to do so, the Russian delegation would like its position and opinion to be duly reflected in the Committee's documents.

Mr. SLABY (Czech Republic): My delegation would like to express its dissatisfaction with obsolete language in the draft decision on St. Helena, contained in document A/AC.109/L.1800.

We fully share the position and reservations expressed by the delegation of the Russian Federation. That is why my delegation does not participate in accepting this draft decision and reserves its right to express its position during the forty-eighth session of the General Assembly.

The CHAIRMAN: If there are no further comments, since the Subcommittee approved the draft decision contained in the report without a vote, may I take it that the Committee wishes to do the same?

The Committee adopted the report (A/AC.109/L.1800) and approved the draft decision contained therein. (A/AC.109/1172)

The CHAIRMAN: The Committee adopts the report and approves the draft decision contained therein on the understanding that the reservations expressed by members of the Committee will be reflected in the records of the meeting.

QUESTIONS OF AMERICAN SAMOA, ANGUILLA, BERMUDA, BRITISH VIRGIN ISLANDS, CAYMAN ISLANDS, GUAM, MONTSERRAT, TOKELAU, TURKS AND CAICOS ISLANDS, UNITED STATES VIRGIN ISLANDS (A/AC.109/L.1796)

Mr. BEREZOVSKY (Russian Federation) (interpretation from Russian): I should like some clarification regarding document A/AC.109/L.1796, which contains the draft consolidated resolution. Are we now ready to make a decision on this subject? I ask because there seem to be some problems with regard to differing information contained in the draft resolution and the report (A/AC.109/1159) of the Pacific Regional Seminar as it relates to the question of American Samoa. I should be grateful for an explanation.

Mr. SENILOLI (Fiji): I have listened with great interest during the past week to the deliberations and the various petitions presented to the Committee. Being a new representative on the Committee, I am very interested in all the documents and everything else presented to us.

In connection with the question of American Samoa, we have taken note of the concern expressed by the representative of Sierra Leone last week. I am sure the representative of the Russian Federation is referring to the same question.

Reading the report of the Seminar held in Papua New Guinea, I had the impression that it was actually the Lieutenant-Governor who presented the case on American Samoa. To me, the Lieutenant-Governor represents the administering Power of American Samoa. We do not really know the views of the people at the grassroots level in American Samoa. What do they think about self-determination, independence and the ability to govern their own destiny rather than being ruled by another nation?

(Mr. Seniloli, Fiji)

Coming from an ex-colcny - and I am sure there are many delegations here representing countries that were once colonies - I know there is always a misconception that being the colony of a super-Power, as American Samoa is, is probably the best thing in the world to be. It is incumbent upon this Committee also to educate the people of colonies and administered Territories on the pros and cons of self-determination and the ability to govern and determine their own destiny.

(Mr. Seniloli, Fiji)

My delegation feels that the statement made by the Lieutenant-Governor of American Samoa should be taken with a pinch of salt, since we do not think it represents the views of a wide cross-section of the population of American Samoa. Perhaps we will not be able to tell until there is a referendum, and therefore I go along with the suggestion made last week that we need more time to discuss the question of American Samoa.

From what I know of Samoa, the people of the Samoan Islands do not wish to see two Samoas. They wish to see one Samoa - one united Samoa. I know this is probably not the view of American Samoa, but I know there are parts of Samoa, Fiji's next-door neighbour, that want to see one Samoa, not two. The Committee should bear that in mind as it proceeds to execute the mandate from the General Assembly regarding the eradication of colonialism from the face of the earth by the year 2000.

The CHAIRMAN: On the basis of this brief discussion, may I inform the Committee that there have been some informal consultations with the members of the Committee on how we should proceed, on the basis of the information available to us and also as a result of the recent Pacific Regional Seminar on decolonization held in Port Moresby.

In those consultations I informally contacted the administering Power to seek its reaction on an appropriate course of action based on the information we have. I floated the idea of postponing consideration of the consolidated draft resolution, especially the part on American Samoa. If that is agreed, a separate decision could be taken on American Samoa, reflecting the postponement and also requesting the territorial representatives and the administering Power to provide further information for our consideration next year.

(The Chairman)

I have not yet heard from the administering Power, but I have been advised that something may be forthcoming today. I therefore suggest that we defer consideration of this item until our next meeting, when we could take up consideration of the consolidated draft resolution now before the Committee. This will give members of the Committee time for further consultations, and in the meantime we may hear something from the administering Power.

Mr. MARTINEZ BOUE (Cuba) (interpretation from Spanish): I agree with your suggestion, Sir. May we assume that on this occasion the administering Power will be prepared to cooperate in the work of the Committee, or are we just expressing the hope that the administering Power can join in the Committee's work? I have some doubts about this. We have not yet had any response.

The CHAIRMAN: If nothing comes out of these consultations at this stage, the Committee may proceed to follow the recommendation made by the Subcommittee. However, that will also give us time to take up the matter at our session next year.

Mr. SENILOLI (Fiji): I should like to clarify my delegation's position. I was referring to the question raised by the representative of Sierra Leone as to whether we should continue discussing American Samoa. My comment has nothing to do with the non-adoption of the resolution on American Samoa. In other words, my delegation fully supports the draft consolidated resolution as it relates to American Samoa.

The CHAIRMAN: In order further to clarify the matter, I think it would be useful to look at the consolidated draft resolution as a whole, rather than deal with one piece of it now and then take up the part on

(The Chairman)

American Samoa at our next meeting. It would be much tidier to look at the draft resolution as a whole at the same meeting. That is what I propose.

Are there any difficulties with that proposal?

Mr. MWAMBULUKUTU (United Republic of Tanzania): I believe it would be much easier to adopt the argument of the representative of Fiji that the report as it stands has nothing to do with statements made last week about American Samoa. We think that it is just a question of the opinion of one man who attended the Seminar in Port Moresby and implied that American Samoa did not need the Committee. Let us not determine the course of our work as though we were pandering to the interests of the Lieutenant-Governor.

We are looking at the report of the Subcommittee, and unless there is something seriously wrong I see no problem in adopting the draft resolution as it is. If we want to follow up on the Seminar, there is another way to do it. We could do so at the next session, which would give you, Sir, enough time to consult whomever you are mandated to consult. I think that is how we should proceed.

Mr. BANGALI (Sierra Leone): I had not intended to speak again on this matter; I believe our case has been amply stated. I spoke several times last week, and the position has not changed. I do not think my colleague from Tanzania was right to say that this was one man's opinion. I believe the issue I raised was shared by more than one delegation. I went along with your summary, Mr. Chairman, and therefore did not make any additional comments. However, if there is indeed some problem with the draft resolution, I think we should look at the total draft rather than taking out American Samoa.

Once again, let me clarify one point. I specifically mentioned American Samoa because we listened to an elected representative of that Territory, the

(Mr. Bangali, Sierra Leone)

Lieutenant-Governor, who stated, as I indicated last week, that the people of American Samoa were comfortable and happy with the status quo. My question, which I repeat, was whether there was any point in continuing to consider American Samoa. I believe that it has elicited some discussion. I fully support your proposal, Sir, and think that that is the best way to proceed.

The CHAIRMAN: If our colleague from Tanzania agrees, we can have a look at the whole draft consolidated resolution at tomorrow's meeting and take a decision then. I see that he is indicating agreement.

Mr. SENILOLI (Fiji): My delegation wishes to make some points on the draft resolutions that may help us in pondering them before we continue the discussion of the issue tomorrow.

There is an absence of language about encouraging more dialogue between the administering Powers and the administered Territories. That applies to the entire draft consolidated resolution, including the various draft resolutions regarding the Territories. As the administering Powers fail to participate in this Committee and attempts to get them to participate more have been fruitless, perhaps such language should be taken into consideration in the wording of the draft resolutions in future.

There is a second matter that has a great deal to do with the non-participation of the administering Powers. Paragraph 12 of the draft consolidated resolution perhaps has the greatest bearing on the matter. It refers to getting the administering Powers to report regularly. Perhaps there are shortcomings here. It is my understanding that reports are to be made to this Committee, which will report to the Secretary-General or the General Assembly. I do not know whether this will have any effect on the administering Powers, which are turning a blind eye or deaf ears to all the draft resolutions having to do with their participation. If the adminstering Powers are not in a position to report to the Committee, perhaps there should be some provisions in the draft resolutions for reporting directly to the General Assembly, the Secretary-General or whomever, if that will help increase the participation of the administering Powers.

(Mr. Seniloli, Fiji)

The General Assembly's mandate for this Committee is to attempt to eradicate colonialism from the face of the Earth by the year 2000. In the absence of the participation of the administering Powers, my delegation does not feel that we can achieve that objective within that time-frame. If the administering Powers are not reporting to this Committee, they might report to someone they regard as being more important - the Secretary-General, the General Assembly or whomever.

The CHAIRMAN: Regarding the last point made by the representative of Fiji, I wish to refer the Committee to the Charter obligations under Article 73 e, which requires the administering authorities to report to the Secretary-General on the Territories under their administration. There are also various resolutions that refer to that. I am sure that in the course of consultations on the draft resolution members will see that there are either indirect or specific references to their concerns.

If there are no comments, I shall take it that the Committee agrees to defer further consideration of the draft consolidated resolution until our next meeting.

It was so decided.

ORGANIZATION OF WORK

The CHAIRMAN: I wish to inform the Committee that I shall be leaving for Geneva tomorrow to attend the meetings of the Economic and Social Council when it considers the item concerning implementation of the Declaration by the specialized agencies. Upon my return I shall report to the Committee on the outcome of its consideration. Since the Committee has not considered the item yet, perhaps it can take into account the results of the

(The Chairman)

Economic and Social Council consideration when formulating its draft resolution.

The meeting rose at 11.40 a.m.